

Below is our latest newsletter, Please feel free to share it!



February 2024

Newsletter

friends of
LAGUNA ATASCOSA
national wildlife refuge

[Event Flier PDF](#)

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Upcoming events
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Every Friday & Saturday 9am Birds & Nature walk with Mark Warner

Feb 02 Wild Friends Storytime: At the Marsh in the Meadow
(Laguna Atascosa Visitor Center)

Feb 03 Bike the Wildlife Drive with Mark Salvatore

Feb 03 Friends Science Series: Family Fish Camp

Feb 04 **MEMBERS ONLY**-Wild Spaces Photography Club Invitational

Feb 06 Friends Science Series: BIRD 101

Feb 09-11 Winter Wildlife Expo - Tours Feb 6, 7, 8
see SPI Birding Center site: www.spibirding.com/wwe2024

Feb 16 **VOLUNTEER**-Join the Naturally Native Garden Team

Feb 17 Bike the Bahia with Mark Salvatore

Feb 18 Hike the Bahia with Mark Salvatore

Feb 21 Wild Friends Storytime: At the Marsh in the Meadow
(Laguna Vista Library)

Feb 24 Winter Texan Appreciation Day Matinee Movie
(South Texas Ecotourism Center)

REGISTER: <https://flanwr.org>

See the website for time, place and details. Most of our events do require registration and have a waitlist. Please cancel if you cannot attend. Thank You!

Events are separated into General, Volunteer or Membership functions. See the home page for a full list and the appropriate link to register. Membership exclusive events require login to view.

Take your support to the next level



WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

- You want to make a difference, and show your appreciation and support for the refuge in a concrete manner.
- You enjoy the outdoors, hiking the trails, seeing the wildlife, and you want to make sure it will still be there for generations to come.
- You want to receive early registration announcements for public events and attend popular environmental education programs.
- You want to take advantage of member-exclusive clubs and events!
- You want to join a community of like-minded people who care about nature and want to preserve and protect this wonderful asset.... And have fun doing it!



Lesser nighthawk Photo credit: Dr. Greg

TXLA CBC HIT RECORD #'s

It was a record year!

39 PARTICIPANTS high record

14 RARE BIRDS reported

189 SPECIES high record

60179 BIRDS COUNTED (low)

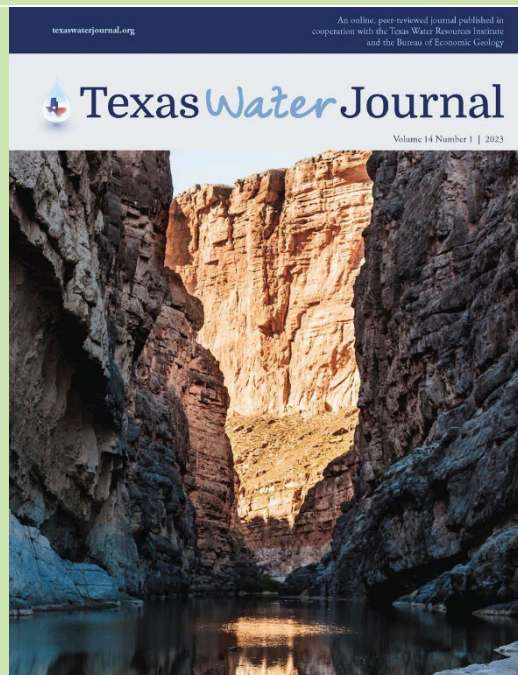
In honor of

World Wetlands Day

February 2

Fern, Rachel R., Mattityahu D. Baron, Angela E. England, Jordan C. Giese, Kevin J. Kraai, Joseph D. Lancaster, Shaun L. Oldenburger, James C. Shipes, Barry C. Wilson, and Sara R. Wyckoff. 2023. "The State of Texas Wetlands: A Review of Current and Future Challenges". *Texas Water Journal* 14 (1). College Station, Texas:136-74. <https://doi.org/10.21423/twj.v14i1.7163>.

Published 2023-12-18



Abstract

With roughly 3.9 million acres of wetlands, 2.3% of its total land area, Texas has the fifth largest wetland acreage in the United States. As of 1990, there was an estimated 52% reduction in the state's original wetland acreage, but there has been no recent assessment of statewide wetland loss or gain since then. Wetlands provide critical ecosystem services, including wildlife habitat, flood storage and control, aquifer recharge, water quality improvement, and pollutant breakdown and storage of greenhouse gasses as well as human recreational opportunities including boating, paddling, fishing, hunting, birdwatching, hiking, and nature photography. Texas wetlands face intensifying challenges in the coming decades. Regulatory and legislative action should be forward-facing, anticipating effects of climate change, sea level rise, and urban expansion. Incorporating new technologies will allow for more timely and cost-efficient large-scale

monitoring of wetland loss and gain. The residents of Texas are largely in support of active management of the state's water resources; academic institutions, state and federal agencies, and conservation-minded private entities should work together to ensure the wetlands of Texas persist for wildlife and the generations to come.

Enjoy the full published document by clicking on the Cover Image

Friends of Laguna Atascosa NWR put conservation of wetlands conservation and Important Bird Areas as priorities and partner with other like-minded agencies.

Inspiring People. Inspiring Friends.



This month, our inspiring Friend is Wilma Worden. Wilma, who also goes by “Willie”, is our Friends RV volunteer who lives on-site at the Refuge in the Volunteer Village. Willie is originally from Costa Mesa, California, and she has been volunteering with us since December 2023. Willie will spend the Spring volunteering for the Friends of Laguna Atascosa, and will assist us with the Nature Store, prepping for our monthly programs, and helping us out with our Ocelot Conservation Day. Willie operates the Nature Store from Thursday through Saturday and has been behind the scenes working hard and diligently preparing for our events. She is also instrumental in assisting with daily operations. Willie stated that her favorite thing to do while volunteering at the Refuge is getting the opportunity to meet and talk to people from all over the world, and to assist them so they can have a wonderful experience while at the Refuge. Her favorite RGV specialty bird is the Altamira Oriole because they are so unique and build very interesting nests. Willie is an outstanding volunteer who works very hard for our organization, the

Refuge, and our community. She truly knows the heart of the Friends of Laguna Atascosa and we are very lucky to have her. Amazing work, and way to go, Willie, our Friend!

Creature Feature



Northern Shoveler

The Northern Shoveler gets its name from its large, spoon-shaped bill. Along the bill's edges are small, comb like projections that act like a filter as they feed head down, releasing the water but leaving the food behind. The brightly colored males are easy to spot because of their green heads, rust sides, and white chest. Pairs of Northern Shovelers form bonds and stay together until the fall migration. They are common in the Refuge for nine months of the year; leaving only to escape our hot summer months. Interestingly, when flushed off the nest, a female Northern Shoveler often defecates on her eggs to discourage predators. There is no shortage of Northern Shovelers to be seen at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge as it is a major stopover point during migration for wintering waterfowl.

Laguna Blogguna

The Rare Jewels of South Texas

The Rare Jewels of South Texas

Sun, January 28, 2024 1:56 PM

If you love to watch birds as I do, as well as 35% of the country's population, you already know that South Texas has more than its share of extraordinary avian species. It really should not be too surprising. The Rio Grande Valley is important habitat for birds from the Central and Mississippi flyways that funnel through on their way to and from Central and South America. Other bird species, like the Groove-billed Ani, the Green Jay, and Plain Chachalaca, reach the northern limit of their range in South Texas. At an ecological crossroad, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is strategically located where subtropical climate, gulf coast, great plains, and Chihuahuan desert meet. That's why this refuge has the most extensive bird list of any refuge in the United States, 417 species.

The impact bird watching has had on South Texas is immeasurable with at least 18 identifiable sites focusing on nature. And it is amazing to me to see how new species turn up at these sites from one year to another. This year Resaca de la Palma State Park is hosting several rarities: Roadside Hawk and both the Rose-collared and Gray-collared Becard. The Fan-tailed Warbler has certainly had hundreds, maybe even thousands, of visitors at the UTRGV campus in Brownsville. And who has not seen the darling Burrowing Owl just off the road near San Benito or taken a picture of the most photographed bird in America, the Common Pauraque, the odd-looking nocturnal nightjar always found at Estero Grande State Park. In 2021-22 it was the Bat Falcon at Santa Ana that drew them in. Social media, especially access to e-bird, provides instant gratification for those wanting to add a species to their list, if that is their goal.



American Flamingo @ Lake Atascosa Photo Credit Steve Franklin

LANWR has had its share of such rarities. The American Flamingo has had several visits in the past few years including 2023. As early as 1978 a duck that did not appear in any of the bird books appeared in a marsh near the south part of Bayside. Numerous attempts at identification were made by local experts and staff before the Bahama Pintail was added to the Refuge List. For about a month, birders flocked in from all points. A Sooty Tern brought more observers in 1980. On October 24, 1981, an estimated 500 Wood Storks stopped over briefly. Not only was there a historic "fallout" in 1982, but refuge staff also

observed a Swainson's Warbler and twelve Bobolinks, all during migration season. The appearance of a Gray Silky Flycatcher, the first authenticated record of this Mexican species in the United States, stirred up the birding community. The male species was very cooperative, seen around the visitor's center for more than a week. It is estimated that 250 people came out specifically to see this bird. One birder made two trips from New Jersey before he spotted the bird. A Mangrove Cuckoo and two Black Rails were identified on the refuge in the 1990s. On April 8, 1996, an Orange-billed Nightingale was captured in one of the mist nets being used for a survey. This was the first documentation of this species in the United States,

So, one never knows what may be seen while birding in South Texas. With ranges changing due to climate change, that little orange bird you are watching may be a visitor from far away. Get a picture, if you can, and do all you can to protect this incredibly important habitat for wildlife from a growing number of interlopers.

OPERATIONAL HOURS

See you at the Refuge!

Visitor's Center

Monday - Saturday
7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Nature Store

Monday - Saturday
7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Refuge Access

Sunday - Saturday
Sunrise to Sunset

SUPPORT US

[Save Texas Ocelots](#)
[License Plates](#)



[Get Yours Today!](#)

The Nature Store



[GO SHOPPING!](#)

[Adopt an Ocelot](#)



[Adopt Here!](#)





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